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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [KMPI](#) [SOCI](#) [KU](#)  
SUBJECT: DURING DAS PATTON VISIT KUWAITIS SLAM PARLIAMENT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, Alan G. Misenheimer for  
reason 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Assistant Secretary (NEA/PI) Kent Patton visited Kuwait on February 27 for meetings with the GOK, women activists, and politically active youth. MFA Director of the Follow-Up and Coordination Office, Ambassador Muqamis said that Kuwait lacked confidence in its elected MPs. Women activists at a round-table discussion echoed the GOK's sentiment and spoke of the status of women since gaining the right to vote and running for office in 2005. DAS Patton also spoke with politically active Kuwaiti youth on a broad range of topics ranging from college life in the U.S. to political reform. END SUMMARY.

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SKEPTICISM ABOUT PARLIAMENT  
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¶2. (C) DAS Patton met with the MFA's Director of the Follow-Up and Coordination Office, Ambassador Khaled Al-Muqamis to discuss issues related to the Kuwaiti Parliament and political reform. According to Al-Muqamis, the problem with Parliament stems from the members themselves. He told DAS Patton that MPs in Kuwait are not politicians, nor are they attuned to "the life of the average Kuwaiti." He noted that the MPs looked for their own interests at the expense of Kuwait. Al-Muqamis lamented that "wise" people were needed in the Parliament but added that none would ever be elected. He was skeptical that the new electoral system with five constituencies (vice 25) would elect more qualified MPs. DAS Patton also encouraged Kuwaiti participation at the Forum for the Future ministerial that will be co-chaired by the UAE and Japan and held in Abu Dhabi sometime in the fall.

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WOMEN SAY PARLIAMENT IS "BROKEN"  
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¶3. (C) DAS Patton also met with eight Kuwaiti women activists at a round-table hosted by the Embassy. The women echoed Al-Muqamis' view on the lack of qualified MPs. The women asserted that the Parliament was "broken" and should be more representative. They also stated that there is no vision for Kuwait's future. In terms of their political participation, the women explained that there is a lack of awareness in Kuwait regarding women's political rights, as well as a lack of unity and strategy amongst the women activists themselves. A few of the women at the meeting were former candidates and shared their experiences with DAS Patton. The women noted that surprisingly, most resistance to their participation in the elections came from liberals, and not from Islamists. The women who ran for seats in urban areas faced more difficulties than candidates who ran in tribal or conservative areas. Many of the women pointed out that since the granting of women's political rights in 2005,

there has been no active awareness campaign regarding these rights in the country and that one should be carried out by the GOK.

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YOUTH UNCERTAIN ABOUT KUWAIT'S FUTURE  
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¶4. (C) DAS Patton wound up his visit to Kuwait with a Youth Pizza Event hosted by the A/PolCouns. DAS Patton told the group at large that the U.S. was fully engaged in the Middle East and hoped to continue building strong relationships and to promote democracy in the region. At the event, DAS Patton mingled with 23 politically active Kuwaiti youth representing a broad political spectrum. The growing political divide in the country was demonstrated by how the youth intentionally separated into groups based on their ideologies: liberals versus Islamists.

¶5. (C) The youth showed strong interest in the upcoming U.S. elections and appeared well informed about the candidates. On Kuwait's political landscape, though, many expressed uncertainty about the future and expressed frustration over the political squabbling among MPs. The liberals in the group, in particular, lamented the perceived lack of qualifications of MPs, claiming that some of the MPs are "barely literate."

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Misenheimer